

Message to the Senate Transmitting an International Labor Organization Convention Concerning Discrimination With Respect to Employment and Occupation

May 18, 1998

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith a certified copy of the Convention (No. 111) Concerning Discrimination (Employment and Occupation), adopted by the International Labor Conference at its 42nd Session in Geneva on June 25, 1958. Also transmitted is the report of the Department of State, with a letter dated January 6, 1997, from then Secretary of Labor Robert Reich, concerning the Convention.

This Convention obligates ratifying countries to declare and pursue a national policy aimed at eliminating discrimination with respect to employment and occupation. As explained more fully in the letter from Secretary Reich, U.S. law and practice fully comport with its provisions.

In the interest of clarifying the domestic application of the Convention, my Administration proposes that two understandings accompany U.S. ratification.

The proposed understandings are as follows:

“The United States understands the meaning and scope of Convention No. 111 in light of the relevant conclusions and practice of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations which have been adopted prior to the date of U.S. ratification. The Committee’s conclusions and practice are,

in any event, not legally binding on the United States and have no force and effect on courts in the United States.

“The United States understands that the federal nondiscrimination policy of equal pay for substantially equal work meets the requirements of Convention 111. The United States further understands that Convention 111 does not require or establish the doctrine of comparable worth with respect to compensation as that term is understood under United States law and practice.”

These understandings would have no effect on our international obligations under Convention No. 111.

Ratification of this Convention would be consistent with our policy of seeking to adhere to additional international labor instruments as a means both of ensuring that our domestic labor standards meet international requirements, and of enhancing our ability to call other governments to account for failing to fulfill their obligations under International Labor Organization (ILO) conventions. I recommend that the Senate give its advice and consent to the ratification of ILO Convention No. 111.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
May 18, 1998.

Remarks at the World Trade Organization in Geneva, Switzerland

May 18, 1998

Thank you very much, Director General Ruggiero, Federal Councillor Couchepin. Your Excellencies, thank you for the opportunity to address you on this most important occasion.

Near the end of World War II, as leaders and ordinary citizens began to dream of a system that would prevent a return to war, President Franklin Roosevelt asked the people of the

United States and the world to look ahead to peace with these words: He said, “A basic essential to permanent peace is a decent standard of living for all individual men and women and children in all nations. Freedom from fear is eternally linked with freedom from want.”

It was that understanding that led a farsighted generation of postwar leaders, determined to